

Head of LAUSD adult education Ed Morris ousted as programs teeter

By Barbara Jones, Staff Writer
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Assistant Superintendent Ed Morris has been ousted as head of LAUSD's popular, yet embattled, Adult Education Division, the Daily News has learned.

Morris was notified of the decision about 4 p.m. Tuesday by Deputy Superintendent Jaime Aquino, sources said.

A district spokesman said Morris had been placed on administrative leave and that no additional information would be provided. Morris could not be reached for comment.

The action came just days after Morris was quoted in an National Public Radio interview questioning the long-term value of earning a GED or high-school equivalency certificate, one of the programs offered by his division.

"If I were prepared today with a GED, and that's what I had as an 18-year-old, I'd be scared to death of the future," he said in the Feb. 18 story, in which Superintendent John Deasy also raised concerns about the adequacy of a GED.

Morris joined Adult Education as an English teacher in 1984 and worked his way up to executive director of the division, which serves about 300,000 students.

His most recent contract for \$144,118 a year was signed on July 1, 2010 by then-Superintendent Ramon Cortines. It is due to expire June 30, 2012, the end of the current fiscal year.

With the district facing a \$550 million deficit for the 2012-13 school year, Deasy had proposed eliminating most Adult Education classes and diverting the division's \$200 million in state money to K-12 programs.

Deasy said there was money available to fund GED and high school diploma classes but that parenting, vocational and other career-education programs would be cut.

That proposal touched off a firestorm of protests among Adult Education teachers and students. Supporters launched a website, gathered tens of thousands of signatures and mounting raucous demonstrations at LAUSD headquarters.

The school board had been scheduled on Feb. 14 to make crippling cuts to adult education, as well as arts and preschool programs. On a motion by Steve Zimmer, the board delayed the vote until March 13 in the hope of finding additional funding sources or other programs to cut.

In an interview with the Daily News published Feb. 12, Morris worried about the long-term impact of gutting the Adult Education Division.

"About 74 percent of students in LAUSD qualify for free or reduced-price lunches -- they live in poverty," he said.

"These students will live in poverty for every day of every week of every month of every year until we raise the standard of living of their family.

"The kids can't get themselves out of poverty -- it has to be the parent," he said. "And adult education is the best option in terms of helping students, of developing the community, of providing hope for families, and of providing hope for economic development."

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